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Campus restoration project: New outlook for the lake

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CAMPUS RESTORATION PROJECT: NEW OUTLOOK FOR THE LAKE

The beauty of Furman's campus is legendary. I drive down Furman Mall every day just to experience the glory of its spectacular canopy of trees.

When my oldest daughter, Pearce '02, was a Furman student, she called me one day and, clearly upset, exclaimed, "Dad, they're cutting down the trees on the mall!" I was somewhat shocked to hear this, but as a middle school principal at the time, I had learned not to react immediately to shocking statements.

I did not call the president's office to ask why Furman was chopping away at these stately symbols of the university. Knowing that Furman for the most part employs bright, thoughtful people, I assumed that the school was doing something that needed to be done.

I also surmised, thanks to my biology degree, that the tree thinning my daughter had described was probably done to improve the life spans of the trees and the beauty of the mall. The oaks had evidently grown so tall over the years that they were impinging on each other and endangering their health.

Of course, the work was performed seamlessly. You can't even tell that almost every other tree on the mall has been removed.

This year, as part of its celebration of the "Year of the Environment," Furman will embark on another project that, were my daughter still enrolled, would likely have caused her to call with yet another complaint: "They won't let us feed the ducks anymore!"

No doubt this statement reads like blasphemy to many alumni and friends, but the reasoning behind the new policy is just as sound as the one for the



thinning of the trees: Feeding bread (or whatever) to the waterfowl is bad for their health and for the health of the lake.

For years the lake was a popular swimming hole. Alumni from the '60s and '70s probably remember diving into the lake to take their swimming test — which they had to pass to graduate.

But those days are long gone. Today the lake is extremely polluted. One reason: The growing population of geese and ducks. At the start of this school year, the lake's avian population was six times larger than recommended for a body of water its size (28 acres).

In particular, Canada geese, once rarely seen, have made a remarkable comeback, especially in the Southeast. Their comeback has been so successful that they are becoming nuisances at golf courses, parks, college campuses and many other places, including Furman.

The lake and lakeshore are being fouled by the waterfowl, to the point that it is becoming a health hazard. When the wind blows in a certain direction, students can be heard grumbling about the stench emanating from the lake. And while being thrown in the lake on one's birthday is still a Furman tradition, many students come down with the "birthday flu" soon after going for their swim. Feeding the birds simply attracts more birds to the lake — and perpetuates the problems.

The most visible part of the lake restoration project will be changing the shoreline to add natural vegetation. As the project progresses, Furman will also take humane steps to reduce the waterfowl population.

The project is being developed by an interdisciplinary Lake Restoration Task Force. The group hopes the lake will become a valuable educational resource for Furman and the Greenville community. Although the cleanup is likely to take several years, the benefits

will be long lasting and will make your future visits to the lake safer, healthier and much more enjoyable.

A more extensive article on plans for the lake will appear in a forthcoming issue of the magazine.

> **Special note:** We've barely completed Homecoming 2006, but the planning is already well under way for Homecoming 2007.

Classes ending in 2 and 7 will be celebrating reunions next year at Homecoming, which is scheduled for November 2-4. If you are interested in volunteering to be on your reunion committee or would like more information, please contact Tina Hayes Ballew '78, associate director of the Alumni Association, at tina.ballew@furman.edu or by calling 1-800-PURPLE3.

We hope to see you at Homecoming 2007!

— TOM TRIPLITT '76

The author is director of the Alumni Association.

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